

A Double-Edged Blade

by Kanzeyori

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>
"...wouldn't it be ironic if we choose the princess?" *wide grin*
>
"Highly, my Priest, and it would be amusing to see what turning into a mazoku would do to her psyche. But...no, she's too...impetuous..."
>
"True, she would not fill the position well."
>
"Hmm...Her, I think." *gestures*
>
"Inverse, Inverse, where have--oh, the sister of the Knight of Ceifeed."
>
"...She has cast the Giga Slave." *a single arched eyebrow*

>
"Great potential for chaos there. You're right, Juuou-sama, she will do."
>
"Take your time with this one, remember who her sister is."

>
"Hai. The usual, Juuou-sama?"
>
nod *sips wine*
>
"By any means necessary?"
>
"By any means necessary."
>
~
>
On a hunt one must always scout ahead. I popped over to where she was and studied her, remaining invisible.
>
Facinating creature, this Lina Inverse. Such strength in one so young. Almost no weaknesses; except in matters of the heart.

>
Which is exactly where I'll strike.
>
~
>
The groundwork always take the longest. Always. Little things that could be examined in hindsight and taken as proof. Thinly-veiled

gifts such as the demonblood talismens, a glance every so often, patience with her faults, a willing ear, a lending hand every one in awhile; small hints here and there. And above all give an impression that I never *had* to do anything; that I could just kill them all off but never do.

>
Ahh, the joys of manipulation.

>
Drop the hints closer together. Start a cycle of trust and betrayal and trust again. Get her attention by *any* means possible, try remain on the top of her mind for long periods of time, for any reason at all. An almost kiss, then ignore her for a few weeks. A true kiss, then leave her wondering. Come and go with a cheerfulness despite everything; reaching out a helping hand and then letting that hand go just as fast, like it burned. Everything planned so that I would seem an odd mixture of pride and hesitation; outwardly cheerful, inwardly hurting, emotionally fearful. Everything planned to call on her dormant maternal instincts; for who can resist the cute, but sad and sniffing, chibi??

>
Then turn on the charm, carefully, near unnoticeably. Act the gentleman. Then wait.

>
And then when that one day comes, when Gourry and Amelia snuck off together to snuggle in one of the castle's dark niches and when Zelgadis and Filia headed, hand in hand, lip on lip, into one of her back storerooms, and when Lina is left dazed, alone, and twitching in a facefault on a cold inn floor, that's my cue.

>
Come in, stage left, and offer an arm, a willing ear, and a sympathetic look. Pause, stage center, and give her a warm smile, show her a warm meal (and a glass of wine), and volunteer a warm shoulder. Jokingly submit the offer of a warm bed and a warm body to accompany it. Pretend surprise at her agreement.

>
And remember to smile at her in the morning, genuinely.

>
And there. Presto, one Lina Inverse, wrapped so tightly around my little finger that you couldn't get her off with industrial-strength turpentine.

>
Manipulation is so fun!!

>
And in the morning, when her mind was still fuzzed by sleep and warm, fuzzy feelings, offer her immortality. Look happy at her decision. Call Juuou-sama, and with her there, split off a piece of my aura and power. I joined it with a portion of hers and formed it into a vaguely human shape, then pulled the essence of Lina Inverse from her body and merged it with the human-shaped mixture of power. In a while a new mazoku will be formed, with the mind, shape, and personality of the Bandit Killer.

>
What, you thought a mazoku was made from scratch every time?! If that was true, then all of the Mazoku Lords would be suffering from creative burn out and you would end up with Lesser Mazoku with the personality of potatoes.

>
At any rate, we soon ended up with a new mazoku. Or rather, *my* new mazoku since the underling directly under me had been destroyed, having been on loan to Dynast in his quest to destroy the world.

>
Hmm, why the surprise? We try to destroy the world quite often (hey, anything to pass the time); but never very seriously though (we're doomed to lose anyway, so why bother?; it's the whole hero/villain thing always working against us). However you'd never hear about any of it, after all, how many people know that Lina saved the world? If they did, do you think they'd still be calling her "the Enemy of All Who Live"?

>
But, back to the topic, we brought my brand new servant back to Wolf Pack and resumed plotting where we left off.

>
Which was when I noticed something very, very wrong.

>
The vacant, awe-filled eyes of Lina 'Metallium' were not the intelligent, spirited eyes of Lina Inverse. I remember Juuou-sama leaning in after the merging of her soul, and whispering something to her. I thought nothing of it at the time, too elated at the prospect of my new servant, but now the memory keeps niggling at the back of my mind like some irritating fly.

>
Waiiiit...back up a few thoughts..."too elated"?! What was THAT?!?! And why should it disturb me so much that the transfer wasn't perfect?!

>
I eventually decided to drop the whole matter from my mind.

>
Only it wouldn't leave. And somehow I was forced by that decidedly bastardly niggling at the back of my mind to confront Juuou-sama about it. Who just smiled at me and said off-handedly, "Oh it was just a suggestion..."

>
A suggestion? Just an innocent suggestion? Or a magical imperative?

>
And though I acted normally on the outside (I'm good at that), for several months I stewed and fretted over it all until I finally couldn't face Lina's vapid and adoring look anymore when we returned to our bedroom at night.

>
I tried avoiding her but, considering our positions in the Hierarchy, it did no good. And I think Juuou-sama knew. I think she knew everything, it something about her smirk...

>
I wonder what she whispered to her.

>
~

>
"Xelloss-sama?" I cringed inwardly.

>
"Yes Lina-chan?" We were walking down Juuou-sama's hall of weapons on our way to our rooms.

>
"Have you been avoiding me, Xelloss-sama?"

>
"...why would you say that?"

>
"I don't know. I just thought..."

>
"Oh don't worry about it Lina-chan, we've both been busy." She stopped walking.

>
"It true then."

>
"What's true?" She started sniffing.

>
"You're avoiding me, Xelloss-sama."

>
"Now Lina-chan..." But then, she's not really my Lina-chan is she? Just a mindless shell compared to what she was.

>
"Why have you been avoiding me, Xelloss-sama? Why?" She began tearing up. "I just want to adore you!! I don't even have to share your bed; why can't I just bask in your presence??"

>
"Lina-chan, stop that." I frowned.

>
"Stop what, Xelloss-sama?"

>
"That. The 'Xelloss-sama's. Stop it."

>
"But why Xelloss-sama?" Lina turned her sad, vacant eyes on me. "Don't you *want* to be adored?"

>
"Yes, but..." Somehow I grew flustered. Dammit, I'm not supposed to get flustered.

>
"Don't you *want* to be adored by your 'Lina-chan'?"

>
"*My* Lina-chan?" I choked. "*MY* Lina-chan?!" I turned away from her and absently ran my fingers down the blunt edge of a finely-wrought katana nearby. "*My* Lina-chan would not look back at me without any life or intelligence in her eyes. *My* Lina-chan would not follow me around like a lost, vacant-eyed puppy. And *MY* Lina-chan would not call me 'Xelloss-sama'." There was only silence behind me, and I waited in that choking silence to see what she would do.

>
Light footsteps moved behind me as something was picked up. The shell wearing Lina's name slipped up beside me.
>
"She said it was a dagger, Xelloss." She whispered into my ear.

>
"Wha...?" I felt a blade being pressed into the palm of my hand, edge down and drawing blood. She then pressed her own hand down on top of mine, on top of the edge of the blade, and then removed both hand and dagger.

>
"Juuou-sama told me that love was a dagger, Xelloss." Holding up her hand, she showed me the thin line of blood created by the sharp blade meeting the flesh of her palm, then she held up my own hand so that I could see the thin line of blood created on my own palm. She smiled.

>
No. *Lina* smiled. *My* Lina.

>
"I was wondering when you would crack, Xelloss." She looked down, briefly, at the rapidly healing cut, then looked up at me while tossing her hair back.

>
"You..."

>
"Yes I did. A test." And the sparkle was back in her eyes as if it had never left. "And I can't believe that I had managed to pull that one off on the almighty Trickster Priest."

>
I was speechless.

>
My Lina-chan smiled at me again, and placed the dagger in my hand. "I'll be in our rooms, Xelloss." And that fire-sprite winked at me and sauntered off.

>
I held up the dagger, watching our blood run down both edges and mingling at its tip. Thoughtfully, I replaced the blade then hurried to our rooms.

>
Can't keep my dear Lina-chan waiting, now can I?

>
~*~

>
(end)

>
^_^ I *so* do love writing warm and fluffy stuff! Tell me whatcha think??

>
Oh, btw., about the odd Gourry/Ame and Zel/Filia pairings...frankly, the pairings scare me too and shock the heck out of me (which was what I was trying for in the first place; I mean, come on, you HAD to be in shock when you read that line! ^-^). After all, how else and why else would Lina be twitching on the cold floor all nice and trussed up for Xelly-poo to come by and sweep her off her feet?? ^.~

End
file.